

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:28 a.m. at Summerall Field. In his remarks, he referred to President Robinson's husband, Nicholas Robinson.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Mary Robinson of Ireland

June 13, 1996

President Clinton. Let me begin by saying how delighted I am to welcome President Robinson to the United States, along with the delegation from the Irish Government. The United States is very proud to have been a partner with Ireland in so many ways. We appreciate the work that they have done for peace in Northern Ireland and for peace around the world. And I look forward to this discussion today and our continued common efforts.

Northern Ireland Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned about the rocky start the peace talks have gotten off to and the kind of cool relationship or cool welcoming George Mitchell got there?

President Clinton. Well, it seems to be working itself out. And I believe that talks are going to go forward, and I'll do everything I can to support the process. And I hope very much that somehow the cease-fire can be reestablished so that everybody will participate and there will be a successful resolution of it.

President Ernesto Samper of Colombia

Q. Mr. President, what do you plan to do about the exoneration of Samper yesterday by the Colombian Legislature?

President Clinton. Well, the United States judges its relationships with Colombia on one standard, whether they're cooperating with us in the fight against narcotics. And we will judge our relationship with Colombia based on that standard. And we—however the—they have a democratically elected parliament; they have to vote on matters as they see fit. But we will judge our relationship with a country based on their level of cooperation with us in the fight against narcotics.

Church Burnings in the South

Q. Mr. President, another church fire this morning. Are you concerned that all the atten-

tion, including what you've brought to it, is causing copycats?

President Clinton. Well, it was getting quite a lot of attention before. We, after all, had had a huge number of them. All I can tell you is that the United States will never accept burning churches. It is wrong, and it's evil, and it has to stop. We have to continue to do whatever we can to stop it. And I may have more to say about it later today.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Northern Ireland Peace Process

Q. Mrs. President, you said that you thought that some words of reconciliation would be helpful. Do you think that words of reconciliation from the White House would be helpful for the people of Ireland?

President Robinson. I think the whole approach of the United States has been very helpful, not just today or yesterday but for the last number of years. It has been a very evenhanded, nurturing approach. It has been both words and practical help. And it's, I think, evidenced by the presence of Senator Mitchell in the very sensitive negotiations at the moment.

There are so many different ways in which the United States is being truly helpful. And I have the opportunity during this state visit to express the appreciation of the people of Ireland, and I think it's timely to do that. I think this has been a very special friendship, reflecting the very long links between our two countries, but very, very thoughtful, very helpful, very nurturing, very evenhanded, very sensitive, and very patient. And it's not easy at the moment. Nobody believes it is. And so it needs that true friend who's with you during those times of difficulty. And that is how we view the United States.

Q. Mr. President, did you feel in any way sad at the way Senator Mitchell seemed to have

been treated in the early days of the talks process?

President Clinton. Well, I don't think that Senator Mitchell feels sad about it. I think that we knew, all of us, from the beginning that these would be difficult talks and that there would be some rocky places in the road, especially in the beginning. We hope very much that the talks will proceed successfully now. Some of the procedural issues appear to have been resolved in a satisfactory manner to all parties. I also very much hope that the cease-fire can be reestablished so that everybody will be participating in the talks and they will actually produce what they were meant to produce. And we'll be further along the road to peace.

But I actually feel pretty good about the way things have happened so far. We're still going; it's still rocking along in the right direction.

Q. [Inaudible]—Mr. President, that the IRA might call another cease-fire?

President Clinton. Well, I have no inside information about that. All I can tell you is what I hope will happen. We need everybody involved to have a resolution of this that will, at the other end of it, involve everyone in a system that will lead to permanent peace and reconciliation and participation in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Q. You said when you came to Ireland that you told the men of violence, "Your day is done. Your day is over." Do you still feel that's the case after the Sinn Fein vote in the Northern Ireland elections? How would you interpret that vote?

President Clinton. I don't think it's a vote for violence. That's not the way I interpreted the vote at all. And I think the—I think every voice that represents a substantial element of the people of Northern Ireland needs to be heard in the talks. But if the purpose of the talks is to produce a lasting and enduring peace, you can't have the talks with a gun to your head.

Q. If you were talking directly to Gerry Adams today, what exactly would you say to him about restoration of the cease-fire?

President Clinton. Probably the same thing I've always said—say, first of all, congratulations on the vote, and secondly, I would say I hope that a cease-fire can be secured so that everyone can participate.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:19 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Mary Robinson of Ireland

June 13, 1996

President Clinton. Please be seated. Good afternoon.

Let me begin as I did this morning, by thanking President Robinson for the extraordinary hospitality that Hillary and I and our entire delegation received in Ireland late last year. I don't know whether it's possible to actually equal Irish hospitality, but we're determined to try. I hope that the President of Ireland feels very much at home and very much admired in America because she certainly is.

Once again, I thank President Robinson for the extraordinary contributions of Irish-Americans to our country and for the extraordinary contributions of the Irish people not just to their

neighbors but to strangers in need all around the globe.

Over the past 40 years, every single day there has been an Irish citizen working for peace somewhere in the world. More than 40,000 military personnel have worked in U.N. peace-keeping operations. Great sums of money have been expended by a poor country for humanitarian relief. At this very moment, hundreds of Garda and defense forces are serving in nine different countries, from Lebanon and Cyprus to the Western Sahara and Bosnia. As Ireland has grown and progressed and become more prosperous, the generosity and vision of the Irish people have found a wider and wider range of avenues for their expression. We are very